

“The Gift of the Body of Christ”

Matthew 7: 1-5; Romans 5: 6-8

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A bunch of hypocrites: Most of us have been called hypocrites by others and by our loved ones. Hypocrisy is when one claims to have moral standards and beliefs but do not follow them in their actions. In our scripture reading today, Jesus spoke out against judging others and the hypocrisy of that. The truth is that we all sin, and need the love of God to forgive us and save us.

Prayers for Church Leaders: The Christian life is the life which gives freedom from fear, and joy in the knowledge of a loving – ever present God who walks beside you day by day. To live the Christian life perfectly is impossible because we are not perfect and live in this world with challenges and temptations. Pastors and Christian leaders are to set the example of what the Christian life looks like, but they are not infallible and will disappoint you. The point is that they need encouragement through prayer as much as you do to remain strong in resisting the temptation of being negative and prayer to remain strong, hopeful and enthusiastic for the future.

Encouraging others: When my family and I lived in the Orillia area, I remember driving past a church where it said on their sign – ‘a fellowship of encouragement’. We all need encouragement in life to feel confident that we are not alone but valued by others. Sometimes people come to the church and start to get involved. They see the imperfections of the people, get discouraged and leave. It is important to encourage those who are new and support them as they come to see that others in the church have weakness, they will fail and need forgiveness. Encouragement is vital in building relationships in the body of Christ!

The gifts from God expressed through the body of Christ. When one sees the church as a consumer service where one’s preferences are met, then serving in one of the ministries can make one feel resentful. However, when your attitude is seeing the church as a gift, you will treasure it and seek to help in making the body of Christ strong. It is important to speak about the church in a positive way to your children and to your neighbours. It is the body of Christ!

When I was leaving for the office on Tuesday morning, I stopped to speak with a semi-retired carpenter who was doing some renovations next door for my neighbour. It did not take long until we started speaking about his church experience. He said that when he was first married in London in 1969, he had enough of church and its hypocrisy. He and his wife ‘took a break’ from church. Then when they started to have children, they went back to church for the children. The most surprising thing happened. At that church there was A man who was ‘a picture of joy’. He could not remember seeing joy like that in the church of his youth. That experience was a gift to this man and it changed his perspective of the church.

How has the church been a gift to you?